

Claims 1-10 stand rejected under § 102(e) as anticipated by Broyles.

The applicant respectfully reserves the right to (at a future date) remove the Broyles patent as prior art by proving an earlier date of invention.

In any event, the claimed invention is clearly not disclosed or suggested by Broyles.

Independent claim 1, the only independent claim in the application, recites that at least some of the ribs of the present invention are elastic. This feature allows a doctor to create a wide opening between two neighboring ribs, as illustrated in Figure 3 of the present application.

This feature is not disclosed or suggested by Broyles.

The office action cites column 3, lines 8-19, of Broyles as disclosing this feature. However, this portion of Broyles relates to the material of substrate 10, not the material of strips 18. Although substrate 10 is made of elastic material, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Broyles that strips 18 are elastic. On the contrary, it is clear from the discussion of strips 18 in column 4 of Broyles that strips 18 are made of a different material than substrate 10. Furthermore, one of the examples of suitable material for strips 18 is a metal wire, which indicates that the strips 18 are not elastic.

It is thus respectfully submitted that independent claim 1, and associated dependent claims, are clearly not disclosed or suggested by Broyles for at least this reason.

Furthermore, features of dependent claims are not disclosed or suggested by Broyles.

For example, dependent claim 2 recites that some of the several ribs are broader, with a regular number of narrow ribs arranged therebetween. This feature is clearly not disclosed or suggested by Broyles. In Figure 1 of Broyles, all of the strips 18 are of the same width. It is noted that Broyles contains apertures of different widths, such as aperture 26 and aperture 27; however, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Broyles of the strips being of different width.

Dependent claim 3 recites two short sides of which one is distinguishably different from the other. In the preferred embodiment illustrated in Figure 1 of the present application, this feature corresponds to sides 12a and 12b having different widths. This feature is clearly not disclosed or suggested by Broyles. The office action cites column 6, lines 33-48, of Broyles as disclosing this feature. However, this portion of Broyles merely refers to various apertures or spaces of different widths and does not disclose or suggest making sides distinguishably different from each other, such as by making one side wider than another side. Dependent claim 4, which depends on claim 3, is patentable for a similar reason.

Dependent claim 5 recites that the grid has markings which show the ordinal number of the respective rib. This is not disclosed or suggested by Broyles. The office action refers to column 6, lines 6-8, as disclosing this feature. However, this portion of Broyles merely refers to printing indicia or other markings on the substrate. There is no disclosure or suggestion as to what type of markings may be printed on the substrate and certainly no suggestion that the markings should be an ordinal number of a respective rib.

It is thus respectfully submitted that for at least the reasons set forth above, the present claims are clearly not disclosed or suggested by Broyles.

Respectfully submitted,

By  _____

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